

Talking to Patients with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities about COVID-19 Vaccination

Tips for Healthcare Providers & Clinical Staff



When you're talking with patients who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (II/DDs), it's especially important to make sure your message about COVID-19 vaccination is simple and clear.



There are an estimated 7.38 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the United States.

People with ID/DDs may:

- Have limited mobility
- Difficulty accessing information
- Require close contact with a care provider
- Have trouble understanding information
- Have difficulties with changes in routines
- Have other concerns related to their disability

On this page, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides tips to help you talk with patients with ID/DDs about COVID-19 vaccination and considerations for COVID-19 vaccine site accessibility and scheduling.

5 Tips for Talking to Patients with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Step 1: Keep it simple.

Stick to short words and sentences when you can. Many people with ID/DDs process information in a literal way, so it's best to avoid metaphors and figures of speech.

Step 2: Show that you're listening.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard for everyone, but people with ID/DD—including their parents and care providers — may face additional challenges.

Show your patient that you understand by listening to their concerns, then repeating what you've heard in your own words.

Step 3: Say it in pictures.

COVID-19 Vaccine Resources for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities & Their Care Providers

Social Story



This social story follows Izzy as she gets her COVID-19 shot.

[English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Interactive Social Story

This interactive social story

When you recommend protective behaviors like wearing a mask or keeping a safe distance, use literal, realistic images to help your patients visualize those behaviors.

When possible, break behaviors down into a series of steps, using 1 image to illustrate each step.

You can also use visual schedules with pictures to help patients understand what to expect in new situations.

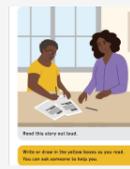
Step 4: Include everyone in the conversation.

If your patient brings a parent, caregiver, or support person to their appointment, be sure to include everyone in the conversation.

When you're asking questions or sharing information, always talk to your patient directly. Then, check in with their caregiver or support person to learn more and make sure everyone is on the same page.

Step 5: Repeat key takeaways.

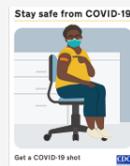
For people with ID/DDs, repetition is key. As you're wrapping up your visit, take time to repeat the main ideas you want your patient to take away from the conversation.



uses fill-in-the-blanks and multiple choice options to help you prepare for getting a COVID-19 shot.

[English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Poster



This poster reminds people to get a shot to stay safe from COVID-19.

[English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Video



This video follows Izzy as she gets her COVID-19 shot.

[English](#) | [Spanish](#)

COVID-19 Vaccine Site Accessibility & Scheduling Considerations

COVID-19 vaccine providers/sites should be ADA compliant, however, ease of use or accessibility will vary widely for people with different disabilities—including for those with ID/DDs.



Ensuring Equitable COVID-19 Vaccine Access

[Guidance for Vaccinating Older Adults and People with Disabilities](#) – This CDC guidance summarizes what jurisdictions should consider when planning to vaccinate older adults and people with disabilities living in the community. It also provides considerations to help jurisdictions ensure equal opportunities for vaccination of these populations.

Have basic, up-to-date information on accommodations available at and processes for all vaccination sites readily available **at the time of scheduling**. For example:

- *Is it a drive-through vaccination site where vaccine recipients will not be required to leave their vehicle?*
- *Is the vaccination site inside a retail business?*
- *Does the vaccination site require long walks or complex processes (such as at a large mass vaccination site with multiple tents, long waits, and/or complex registration processes?)*

Additional Resources

- [COVID-19 Vaccines for People with Disabilities](#)
- [Talking with Patients about COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
- [COVID-19 and People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Final Report – July 2021](#) | [PDF](#) | [Link](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination and People on the Autism Spectrum](#) | [PDF](#) | [Link](#)
- [Getting a Vaccine: What to Know About Me](#) | [Link](#)
(Ohio Department of Health) – Form patients can fill out and take with them when they get their COVID-19 vaccine.
- [COVID-19 Disability Form](#) | [PDF](#)
(Stony Brook University) – Form can help patients communicate what makes them particularly uncomfortable and

(Stony Brook University) – Form can help patients communicate what makes them particularly uncomfortable and which measures can help.

- [GetOutTheVaccine.org](https://www.getoutthevaccine.org/) 

(National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities) – Website to help guide people with ID/DDs to trusted resources on COVID-19 vaccines, particularly where to find one in their area.